



Le Père Julien Moulin et Gabriel Dumont dans une production du Fringe Festival 1985 (Photo : Doug Shanks, Edmonton Sun)

The Betrayal

One-act play

By Laurier Gareau

Production Notes

Gabriel Dumont was in his late sixties when he died in 1906. By 1905, the time of the play, he had made certain concessions to the European way of life. Therefore, he wears either the traditional costume of the Métis, hunting clothes and moccasins, or a turn of the century suit. With either costume, he wears moccasins, carries a finely carved walking stick, and has a pocket watch.

Père Julien Moulin, O.M.I., would be in his early seventies in 1905. A frugal man, he did not indulge in personal material things and his clothes are threadbare and patched. He wears the black oblate cassock, with the cross on a string around the neck. The collar is black, as the white roman collar was not adopted by the Oblates until 1915. *Moulin* always wore a skull-cap.

Although the two men are in their late sixties and early seventies, they should not be made to appear feeble. Both *Dumont* and *Moulin* were still living very active lives.

The setting is the interior of the old rectory of St-Antoine-de-Padoue, Batoche. The action takes place on the second floor where Père *Moulin* has his office, post office, and chapel. The chapel area is down right with an altar against the wall, candles, a small tabernacle, and a prayer stool. Stage left, a railed staircase (partially hidden by a desk, chair, and a row of mailboxes) leads from the lower floor. A centre door leads to *Moulin's* office-library, where shelves of books can be seen against the far wall. Left of this door is a small wood-burning stove. A wooden chair with armrests stands between the door and the stove. Down centre, there is a simple wooden table with benches back and front. A second wooden chair with armrests is placed to the right of this table. A kerosene lamp and a stack of books are on it. This is historically accurate but could be simplified in production. The old rectory (restored to look as it did in 1897) is now part of the Batoche National Historic Park

Dumont and *Moulin* speak to each other in French/Métis, but *Dumont* is more heavily influenced by Cree. These words are translated in the text except for *namoya*, the Cree word for "no" or "never," and *éhé* (pronounced *é-ha*), the Cree word for "yes." *Dumont's* pronunciation of Métis is "méchif".

The Betrayal

It is fall, October, 1905.

The only light comes from two candles burning on the altar. The sound of an organ playing part of the old Latin mass is heard from the nearby church.

*When the lights come up, we see **Dumont** comfortably ensconced in the chair beside the stove fast asleep.*

Moulin comes up the stairs, left. **Dumont** notices him, but pretends to be still asleep. **Moulin** wears the biretta and a white surplice, and carries a collection basket and a prayer book. He sees **Dumont**, but crosses to the table, where he deposits the collection basket before moving over to the chapel. He places the prayer book on the altar and kneels to say a short prayer in Latin. Rising, he blows out the candles, removes the biretta and the surplice, and places them on the altar. He puts on his black skull-cap. Turning to **Dumont**, he sighs, walks over, and gently shakes the other man's shoulder.

Moulin Gabriel. (Pause.) Gabriel!

Dumont (Slowly opens his eyes.) Père! Moulin.

Moulin Gabriel. I'm happy to see you again.

Dumont Éhé. (Pause.)

Moulin It's been a long time.

Dumont Éhé.

Moulin Too long!

Dumont Éhé².

Moulin You know, Gabriel, you're the only one who dares to enter my home...this rectory...without my permission.

Dumont (*Starts to rise.*) Without your permission?

Moulin Oui! And make yourself at home.

Dumont Without your permission!!! The métchifs, didn't they pay to build this building?

Moulin Oui, Gabriel, but....

Dumont Didn't they sweat, the métchifs, to haul the logs from....

Moulin (*Trying to calm Dumont.*) Yes, yes, Gabriel!

Dumont The métchifs, they don't talk about it, but they know that the doors of this place are always open, especially for the police.

Moulin Sit down, please, Gabriel.

(Pause. The two men look at each other for a long moment and finally Dumont sits back down. Moulin sits on the bench behind the table.)

Moulin We are old friends, Gabriel. Why must we always argue?

Dumont (*Nodding his head.*) I don't know.

Moulin I've missed you. You haven't been in to see me now in nearly six months.

Dumont I'm lonely, Père.

Moulin More reason why you shouldn't neglect your old friends.

Dumont They're all gone.

Moulin Who?

Dumont My old friends.

Moulin That's not true at all, Gabriel.

Dumont Éhé., it is. They're all gone. Papa...my brother Isidore... and...and Madeleine.... Especially Madeleine.... And there's also Annie....

Moulin Annie, your adopted daughter, is not dead. She's just....

Dumont Annie's married! To an American! And the only papa she ever know doesn't even know where she is.

Moulin There are many other good old friends here at Batoche. The Carons, the Vennes, the Boyers. They are all your friends.

Dumont And still, I'm lonely, Père!!! *(Pause.) (The two men seem lost in thought of past friendships.)* This morning, I thought I would come in to see some of my old friends.

Moulin Oui, they were all at mass this morning.

Dumont No. I don't talk of the ones that still live. I come to visit my friends, the ones in the cemetery.

Moulin Oh!

Dumont The ones buried in that one small hole...together... like animals...with their heads on the other side of the fence.

Moulin Those poor men...they died following a fool.

Dumont (*Standing. Angry.*) They died fighting for their land....
(*Beat.*) I am an old man, Père. Soon I will join them.

Moulin Oui. I, too, am an old man. Often I think of my own death.

Dumont While I was in the cemetery, I walked up to the top of that hill...past the cross...you know the one?

Moulin Oui. Bien sûr.

Dumont And I stood there and looked down at the Gros Ventres River. That's the name our forefathers give to that river. The Gros Ventres River. But the white man, he had to change the name. To the Saskatchewan. (*Beat.*) I looked at the river, which hasn't change and which the white man can't change. Then I look across the river, toward the west, toward the place where the sun sets, and again I see a land which hasn't been change by the white man and his damn plow. (*Beat.*) Standin' there, Père, I know that is where I want to be buried when I die.

Moulin Shaking his head. Gabriel....

Dumont I want to be buried on top of that hill, facing the Gros Ventres River, looking over that land that the white man can't change.

Moulin Gabriel, that plot is in consecrated ground.

Dumont So?

Moulin Only people who have taken Communion can be buried in consecrated ground.

Dumont So?

Moulin I haven't seen you in church since before the rebellion.

Dumont That's cause I haven't been back.

Moulin Then I couldn't, in all conscience, bury you in consecrated ground.

Dumont Why not?

Moulin Because it is written in the church canon.

Dumont Gabriel Dumont is just an old buffalo hunter. The priests teach that every man is God's child. That God he make everything. Now, Père, you tell me that cause I don't want to go into the priests' church, I can't be buried in a part of God's earth.

Moulin The church, the priests, God. You reject the church and you reject God.

Dumont Namoya¹³ I reject the church cause the priests betrayed me, and my people.

Moulin So, that's why you came! Again. Always the same thing. To put forth your foolish notion of betrayal.

Dumont It's not foolish, Père. I know it! (*Beat.*) But, that's not the reason I came. Soon I will die and I want to be buried on top of that hill, in that cemetery.

Moulin And I tell you that I can't do it, Gabriel.

- Dumont** Then who can?
- Moulin** Only you, Gabriel. Only you.
- Dumont** How?
- Moulin** Reconcile yourself with the church.
- Dumont** I'm an old man, Père, and I've lost everything... everyone who ever mattered.
- Moulin** You haven't. And if you make your peace with the church, you can join those that were close to you... when you die. Your father...your brother, Isidore... Madeleine, your wife.
- Dumont** The church betray me. (*Beat.*) Père Moulin, help me to understand. You say I can't see my family in heaven, unless I make peace with that church.
- Moulin** Oui.
- Dumont** But you see, I can't forget it was that church that betray the métchifs here at Batoche.
- Moulin** That is only a foolish idea in your head, Gabriel.
- Dumont** Namoya! I can't forget...I can't forget seeing you, and Père Fourmond, and Père Vegreville, and the others.... I see you all standing in front of this rectory, talking to that Général Middleton.
- Moulin** And I've told you a hundred times that we were only concerned for the wounded. (*Beat.*) I've also told you to forget the past.
- Dumont** Namoya, cause Riel is rotting in the cemetery in St. Boniface cause of you.

Moulin Oui, he was hanged and often I think of him.... But, it's an old story. And today, you come because you want to be buried in God's sacred ground.

Dumont On top of the hill, overlooking that Gros Ventres River.

Moulin Tell me what you want me to do.

Dumont I come to visit an old friend. One who is always tell the truth with me, except that one time. The old Père always refuse to tell me that he betray the métchifs.

Moulin Gabriel, please, don't....

Dumont But, that's not why I'm here. (*Beat.*) I come back to ask questions of the old Père, who is always tell the truth to me...except that one time.

Moulin How can I help you, Gabriel?

Dumont Help me make my peace with that church.

Moulin Oui Gabriel, I will.

Dumont But first, help me to make sense of this.

Moulin Sense?

Dumont Éhé, sense! The priests, they tell us one thing and then they do another.

Moulin I don't understand.

Dumont They say you are speak for that God.

Moulin Oui, c'est vrai.

Dumont And that God was on our side...because we was good Catholics.

Moulin Oui.

Dumont But, during the battle...the priests, they side with the police....

Moulin Non, Gabriel!

Dumont Ehe!

Moulin We wanted the fighting to end.

Dumont So that the métchifs could starve to death?

Moulin There was no reason to starve.

Dumont Our way of life was gone! The hunt — the trapping — and with that railroad they was building, the métchifs would lose those jobs of fréttagé. Éhé. We was going to starve!

Moulin All you had to do was establish yourselves on farms.

Dumont Farms!

Moulin The life of a farmer, Gabriel.

Dumont (*Leans on the table and brings his face close to **Moulin**'s.*) Today, the young métchifs, they're too lazy.

Moulin They're leading a very good life.

Dumont (*Turns his back on **Moulin**.*) Bahhh! They're no longer free men, those métchifs. How can you lead the good life when you're no longer a free man, Père?

Moulin (*Rises, hoping to convince Dumont.*) Look at all the grain they're harvesting. Enough to feed the world — to make bread for everyone — galettes.

Dumont That grain, it's rotting in the sheds, because no one will buy it.

Moulin But some day — this will be an established community, and the world will want the grain that the Métis will produce.

Dumont (*Shaking his head.*) And what about us, Père? Wasn't that the good life when I was a young hunter... and you was a young priest.

Moulin You're not listening, Gabriel.

Dumont Gabriel Dumont, he listen. He listen to the cries of the apisesisiw⁴, the little ones, because they are important to the métchifs.

Moulin And I was crying for those little ones, the apisesisiw, when you and those other rebels, were putting them in danger.

Dumont We was not rebels, Père. We was fighting for that good life.

Moulin Were you thinking of the little ones then — or of your wives — when you picked up your guns?

Dumont That's all we was thinking of!

Moulin Jamais! You were a bunch of hot-headed fools who wanted to go on living like your grandfathers had lived.

Dumont Éhé!

Moulin Gabriel! You and those others, you have to accept that your way of life is gone. That way of life that was your grandfathers' was an enormous waste of land.

Dumont It was our land!

Moulin Think of the waste, Gabriel!

Dumont What waste? Just tell me. What waste?

Moulin This prairie can welcome thousands of farmers. Before, it was a place where only a few Métis and Indian hunters could survive.

Dumont Éhé. That was good.

Moulin Éhé, that was good, but happiness on this earth won't guarantee that you'll enter into paradise.

Dumont You and that paradise. We had that paradise, here at Batoche. (*Pause.*) When I was three, I couldn't yet reach the height of my papa's old musket, I first go with my family to the prairie south of the Missouri Coteau. My first buffalo hunt. I had to stay with the women and the wagon, but I was proud to watch those fifty proud hunters, on their best horses; they wear the clothes of the Métis hunter. A few bright bits of cloth that was all they have of your civilization—the Hudson Bay Company. (*Pause.*) I see them wait there, in a straight line, wait for the signal from the capitaine. The old women, the wives and mothers of the hunters, and us, the apisesisiw...we go behind in the carts. And then, the capitaine he give the signal. (*Pause.*) The horsemen leave the camp...slow...and then faster...and faster, until they was move at the full galop. And cause of the dust, we in the camp never lose them from the sight. We get into the carts; the

hunters are with the buffaloes. They was in the middle of the running buffaloes, firing and firing again and again. (*Using the cane, Dumont, mimes the action of a rifleman.*)

We in the cart, we start to follow. We lose them from sight, but we know where to go. We can see the dust and hear the rifle...and we hear the pounding of a million hooves on the hard packed earth. (*Beat.*) A million hooves on that hard ground. (*Pause.*) We was a community, back then, les métchifs. Back then, we live for one thing...that hunt. It was a good time when we could finally leave for that hunt.

(*He turns to Moulin.*) We was a people then. We was a community. Each métchif, he have his place in that community. The awasis⁵ of three or the old widow, the best hunter or the mother...they was all important. The hunter, he bring the meat. The mother, she butcher the buffalo to get the meat and the hide. The old widow, she was there for her pilgrimage to the memory of her husband who died five years before, when his horse stepped in a hole and the buffaloes run over him. And the awasis of three, he is also important, because he comfort that old widow. (*Pause.*) In those days, Père, we didn't have church. The priest, he travel with us when he can. And he never refuse to bury a man because he hadn't been back in church for many years.

Moulin Those days are gone, Gabriel.

Dumont Éhé! They're gone. And our community too. The priests, they tell us that it is better for us this way. It is civilization, they say. And now, each métchif is only interest in his own business. And because of that, that old widow, who does she turn to? Who will take care of her now? She don't have a community.

- Moulin** She can always turn to the community of God.
- Dumont** (*Shakes his head and sits on the bench in front of the table.*) And will that community of God put food on the table?
- Moulin** We do what we can.
- Dumont** And we was doing what we could in '85.
- Moulin** By defying your priests?
- Dumont** (*Shrugs.*) The priests was no longer on our side.
- Moulin** (*Sits beside DUMONT, but in the position of a debater, not close.*) We did what we did because you were following that madman Riel.
- Dumont** (*Pause.*) Riel. (*Sighs.*) Riel, Père, was the only man I ever called my leader.
- Moulin** So often I think of what he did here at Batoche.
- Dumont** Riel, he was too much of a kind man. He spent too many years in that seminary in Québec. It wash his Indian blood from his vein. He was afraid, Père. Afraid to see the blood of his enemy flow on that prairie grass.
- Moulin** (*Horried.*) Gabriel!!
- Dumont** (*Pause.*) I had always been the leader of my people. First, it was the buffalo hunt, and, later, our little town at Grandin. Beat. I chose to follow Riel. I chose because he was my friend. Éhé! He was my friend — for a little time here at Batoche. I also follow him because I believe in him. I believe in what he says.
- Moulin** He deceived you!

- Dumont** (*To himself.*) I believe that Riel — and I shouldn't have.
- Moulin** He deceived all of you. We, the priests, could see that, but you wouldn't listen to us. He was leading you down a path where you were going to lose everything.
- Dumont** (*Calm. Rises.*) We lose everything.
- Moulin** Not your souls.
- Dumont** Les métchifs lose everything. But, we could have won. We could have won if only I hadn't listened to that Riel. (*Beat.*) And if les métchifs hadn't listened to their priests, I could have had five thousand men. (*Getting excited.*) I would have beat those police. I know it! But, that Riel, he said we had to fight, but then he was afraid to watch those police die.
- Moulin** Gabriel —
- Dumont** And because of that, I have to watch the blood of my brothers seep into the soil, here at Batoche.
- Moulin** I have thanked God many times that His church and rectory were not burned to the ground.
- Dumont** (*Pause. He turns and stares hard at Moulin.*) My brother was kill in the fighting and all you can think of is this building!
- Moulin** “Général” Middleton and his soldiers were burning every house down. We just didn't...didn't want this carnage....
- Dumont** My brother and my friends give up their life and all you can think of are some damn buildings!
- Moulin** Gabriel! If only you had listened to us. “Général” Middleton did not want to hurt you...to kill you.
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If only you had listened to us, your priests, from the beginning.

Dumont (*Sneers.*) So, Père Moulin, you finally admit that you betray les métchifs.

Moulin Non! (*Beat.*) The Métis were ready to listen to you, Gabriel.

Dumont Éhé! And they did, and I fail them.

Moulin You could have talked them out of those fool notions that Riel was putting in their heads. (**Dumont shrugs.**) Oui, you could have. The Métis were ready to listen to Gabriel Dumont, their leader. If you had just tried to talk them out of this madness, this sacrilege, then all the troubles would have been avoided. The Métis could have lived in peace.

Dumont Namoya!

Moulin Oui! And you can still live in peace.

Dumont We would not have been free. We would have been slave to the church...

Moulin Gabriel...

Dumont ...and the police. Cause the police, they would never allow us to live in peace. People, they are not bad, but those police...we had to destroy those police to be free again.

Moulin Gabriel....

Dumont We had to destroy those government police! (*Beat.*) Maybe we should have start with the church. Maybe Riel he was right. Maybe, you was our enemy.

(A silence.)

Moulin When you came here, Gabriel, you talked of being buried in God's consecrated ground and now, now you talk of destroying His church.

Dumont That's what I feel in my heart.

Moulin Twenty years have passed.

Dumont Éhé!

Moulin Merci le bon Dieu we still live in a democracy.

Dumont Didn't we have a democracy in Grandin back in '75, Père.

Moulin Oui.

Dumont Didn't we live in a democracy when the police they ride into our settlement and tell us that we had to stop making law to protect ourselves.

Moulin We must live according to the laws of the country.

Dumont As long as the métchifs was on the hunt, the law of the hunt was the law of the land. Then, the police, they come and tell us that our laws aren't good. They have new law. *(Sneers.)* Law to protect the white man. *(Beat.)* Well, I don't like it. I got my gun and the métchifs don't need any other law than that.

Moulin Today, it is time to put away your gun, Gabriel. Today, we are a civilized country and we put our faith in the justice and the laws made by our elected representatives.

Dumont *(Takes a deep breath before replying.)* Riel, he have faith in those law and they hang him.

Moulin (*Taken aback.*) It...it was...a mistake.

Dumont It's always a mistake when it come to the Indians and the métchifs.... Even today.... Is that mistake the old buffalo hunter can't be buried in that cemetery?

Moulin It would be easy for you to make your peace with the Church.

Dumont Éhé! It would be easy. It would be as easy like when les métchifs make their peace with the government after the battle.

Moulin Oui.

Dumont Except, that I see those men who was well off before... that Jean Caron you talk about, today, they are fight to keep their land...or have to leave...cause someone else take their land. And those men, Père, today they are live like beggars and their children starve. It was easy for them to make a peace, but now it is hard for them to live like men.

(A silence.)

Moulin Gabriel, I will always be ready to be your confessor. If you want to be buried in...

Dumont (*Disregarding Moulin.*) A long time ago, the métchifs, they see that the buffalo would go away. They was ready to settle down on the farm, like the father of our father had done down along the Saint- Laurent. In those days, the priests, they was with us. They was our advisor, our brother... and our confessor.

Moulin And we still are. We are still ready to hear the confessions of those who want to confess themselves.

Dumont Why? Why should I confess myself to you?

Moulin (*Pause.*) You have listened too much to Riel. He defiled the sanctity of the confessional. I was scandalized to see those poor, innocent Métis following his lead and confessing themselves to each other. I remember that time I saw Baptiste Boucher confessing himself to Auguste Laframboise.

Dumont When was that, Père?

Moulin Well, you must remember? It was on the eve of the battle here at Batoche.

Dumont That would have been?

Moulin In May, of course.

Dumont (*Chuckling.*) Then, I guess Baptiste Boucher he confess himself to an angel, Père, cause Auguste Laframboise, he was kill at Duck Lake... two months before....

(**Dumont** goes on chuckling. **Moulin**, feeling quite uncomfortable, goes out the door into his office.)

Moulin (*Off.*) Gabriel, I'll take some wine. Would you like some?

Dumont Éhé. Thank you. (*Absent-mindedly.*) It is funny thing this. (*He turns, picks up the collection basket, and starts playing with the pennies.*)

Moulin (*Off.*) What?

Dumont The priests, they don't like when the métchifs, they drink, but the wine, it is always there for the priests.

Moulin (*Off. Laughing.*) It's a weakness I have, for the old country.

Dumont Don't do like I do, do like I say to do. (*Beat.*) Me, your priest, I have a weakness for that old country, but you métchifs, you don't have the right to have that weakness.

Moulin Here.

(Moulin returns with the two full wine glasses. He notices Dumont playing with the money. Placing the glasses on the table, he takes the basket and, like a mother removing candy from a child, he makes sure that Dumont hasn't palmed any of the pennies. Dumont gives him a mocking smile. Moulin goes off again, with the collection basket, to his office.)

Dumont I'd like to be able to read, Père. I'd like to read your Bible. To read what the Jesus say about the merchants in the temple.

(Moulin returns, without the basket.)

Moulin I'm sorry, Gabriel. I wasn't listening.

Dumont (*The mocking smile again.*) (*Evasive.*) Oh, the old hunter was just mumbling about...the Bible...the métchifs...the wine.

Moulin (*Takes his glass and sits in chair right.*) Oui, you are right, Gabriel. Perhaps. Sometimes, we do interpret the word of God too freely. But, we know our poor Métis. They're brave people aside from that...but, they're unable to refrain from drinking when they see alcohol.

Dumont (*About to drink.*) Changes his mind. And that is a sin?

Moulin *(Takes a sip of wine.)* It is a weakness. We are against the Métis drinking, because when they drink, they are wasting the good God gave them. We must keep an eye on our poor Métis, because they are like little children, and we are like the mother who must watch over her children.

Dumont The priests, they never change. They always see us as just children.

Moulin Is it wrong to love one's children, Gabriel?

Dumont We are not children, Père!

Moulin Then, why do you behave like children?

Dumont Is it like children to hate those who would destroy you?

Moulin Oui!

Dumont Namoya!! *(Beat.)* I see your old country, Père.

Moulin Oui, you have told me.

Dumont I see that Paris...and I don't like it. There was always too many people...coming after me...like I was some kind of hero. I couldn't find any peace. *(He pulls a pocket watch from his vest pocket and gently fingers it.)* All the time I was there, I see how your people, they live. I see men steal and beat other men. I see women sent to prison because they steal a loaf of bread to feed their children. *(Beat.)* You call us children, Père. But at least, we was happy here. *(Beat.)* When I was there, all I wanted was to see again my beautiful prairie. Because at least, here, we was a people who care.

Moulin You saw only the bad.

Dumont I see your civilization, Père. What you believe is good for us.

Moulin Non, Gabriel. There is much good everywhere, even in Paris.

Dumont Then why didn't you stay?

Moulin I have been here in the North West now for more than thirty years.

Dumont Éhé. Looking after those children.

Moulin I understand you, Gabriel. You could never be happy in the city. None of my Métis could. That is why you are better off here, on your farms. Away from the temptations. Only by staying here, away from sin can you remain faithful to your Church. The Métis are good Catholics, Gabriel, and they could never find happiness in the city.

Dumont (*Shaking his head.*) And you?

Moulin I grew up in a small town in Brittany...in the north of France. A town bigger than Batoche, but not much. Then, I went to Paris...to the seminary. I was happy in Paris, Gabriel. I could visit Notre Dame, go to Montmartre. Just to meet people. Oui, I was happy there.

Dumont Then why didn't you stay? Why did you have to come here?

Moulin (*Pensive.*) Why? I could have been a bishop... perhaps even a cardinal. But, I was a sinner, Gabriel. Oui, even priests can be sinners. (*Beat.*) My sin was that I was interested in the stars. I would spend hours studying the skies. I was fascinated by the heavens. As a young seminarian, I often wondered how the stars

could affect our daily lives. It's a science, Gabriel, but some people can foretell the future from the stars. (*Beat.*) But, my superiors were not amused. Only God could read the future and so, I was sent here, to the North West, to do penance.

Dumont What did those stars tell you about les métchifs?

Moulin Gabriel! I have spend thirty years, here in the North West. Sometimes, I no longer understand anything. Out here, on the prairie, the skies are so big. There are so many stars. Were they wrong, those people? The ones who believe they could foretell the future. (*Pause.*) After thirty years, Gabriel, all I know is that here I can find peace and quiet. I can walk along the River, or in the woods.

Dumont You can set up your tent besides the rectory in the summer.

Moulin Oui, I can do that. And there, I can be closer to the stars. Perhaps, Gabriel, when I'm in my tent in the summertime, I can be closer to my God. (*Pause.*) You came here, today, because you do not understand why you cannot be buried in sacred ground. I don't always understand it myself. There are many books on theology that I have read. Yet, out here, sometimes I'm not sure they mean much anymore. In the thirty years that I've been here, I've often traveled with the Métis or the Indians. Maybe, there is something in the Indian belief. Maybe, our church is too strict. It is possible that we could have learned something about God if we had wanted to learn the Indian ways. Your mother's people were closer to nature than anyone. They believed in the earth and in the skies, Gabriel. Why couldn't we?

Dumont (*Picks up one of the books from the table and fingers it.*) You believe in those books.

Moulin Oui. And the books tell us that we are here to convert the Indians to Christianity.

Dumont (*Quiet.*) To make them prisoners.

Moulin Non. To lead them to God.

Dumont Namoya! To control us. You priests, you are like the Americans. They want to control us. The Americans, they see that we, the métchifs, and our brothers, the Indians, we live off the meat of the buffaloes. To control us, Père, they kill off all the buffaloes, so we would be at their mercy.

Moulin Where do you get all these foolish ideas, Gabriel?

Dumont They are not foolish ideas, Père. It's the truth. And, that's why you was against Riel. Because you couldn't control him, he had to die.

Moulin Riel was a fanatic, an apostate.

Dumont The priests they use the big words...words the métchifs can't understand.

Moulin It means....

Dumont Quiet. It don't matter!

Moulin Non.

Dumont What is important, Père, is that I find that peace.

Moulin Oui. And for that, you must forget the past.

Dumont Those Crees, they believe that when a man die, his spirit follow the buffaloes and all the other animals towards the west...towards Kitse Manito...their god.

That's why they always find that high spot on the ground and they lay their dead facing toward the west. (*Beat.*) If I could be buried in that cemetery, on that high piece of ground overlooking the river, I would be facing the setting sun. Just in case you are wrong, Père, and they was right.

Moulin The Church would never....

Dumont You just said that the Indians was closer to the earth and to the skies.

Moulin Oui. But this, this would be a betrayal of my church.

Dumont You called Riel a fanatic, a madman, yet he was put in the cemetery in Saint-Bonitace.

Moulin But Riel made his peace with God, before he died. Père André was with him.

Dumont If I made my peace with God, could I...?

Moulin Oui, Gabriel.

Dumont Even though in my heart I still believe that the priests be-tray the métchifs. (*Silence.*) Père, is it possible for us to make a deal?

Moulin The Church doesn't work....

Dumont The priests, they make a deal with Riel.

Moulin Oui...but...Riel really believed.

Dumont Riel believe we had to fight. He told me. He told me that even if the priests, they was against us, we had to fight here at Batoche.

- Moulin** All this talk of fighting, it was crazy.
- Dumont** Maybe. But the métchifs, they know they had to beat those English. Humph! Not here, at Batoche, like Riel said, but we had to beat those goddamned English.
- Moulin** Gabriel!!
- (*A silence.*)
- Dumont** Twenty years.
- Moulin** Too long to carry all this hatred.
- Dumont** Twenty years, Père...and I still know I could have beat them.... If only I hadn't listen to that Riel, I would have beat that "Général" Middleton and his army of store clerks and farmers. But, not here at Batoche, where our women and children was. I would have taken those police into the far north — into those swamps, like those Crees with Big Bear did, and I would have beat them. Beat. And here, I saw those traitors — standing here, in front of this building, telling Middleton what we was doing. (*Silence. He looks at Moulin.*) And often, since I come back to Batoche, I have come here, hoping that my old priest would tell me that he help to betray my people.
- Moulin** I thought you came as a friend.
- Dumont** We was friends, that old Père and me. Before the battle.
- Moulin** And today?
- Dumont** Today! Today I just wish the old Père would admit that he betray us. Then, I can forgive him before I die... Then I can forgive myself...for failing my people.

- Moulin** You didn't fail them, Gabriel.
- Dumont** All those people who die. Didn't I fail them, Père?
- Moulin** Non.
- Dumont** And papa.... And my brother Isidore...and even Madeleine...didn't I fail them? Their death would have had meaning if we had only won.
- Moulin** I know it is small comfort, Gabriel, but I'm sure they're in God's kingdom.
- Dumont** Is that why some of my friend are still buried with their heads on the other side of the church fence?
- Moulin** Perhaps...because the church can't forgive as quickly as God can.
- Dumont** Éhé! (*He smiles.*) Maybe, Père, it is time we move the fence.
- Moulin** (*Smiling.*) You might be right, Gabriel.
- Dumont** (*Pause. Surprised.*) And if we can move the fence, then why should there be any problem if the old buffalo hunter is buried on that hill, overlooking the river?
- Moulin** Gabriel, the Church...well the Church is very strict about....
- Dumont** But.... But if we can move the fence, Père....
- Moulin** Oui. (*Beat.*) Still, a man must be reconciled with God before...
- Dumont** He can be buried in that spot?

Moulin Oui.

Dumont Père, I'm an old man. Soon, I shall die. Soon, I will go and meet the other métchifs in heaven.

Moulin Oui. And the bishop in Prince Albert would be happy if Gabriel Dumont was buried in this cemetery. (*Beat.*) You know, Gabriel, sometimes Bishop Pascal thinks I'm too easy with the Métis. You see, he doesn't understand about the stars. (*Beat.*) But, he would be happy if Gabriel Dumont had made his peace with God, before he died. (*Beat.*) In our hearts, Gabriel, we could go on believing in the stars and the buffalo... and Bishop Pascal would be happy too.

Dumont You are right, Père. It is time I make my peace with God...with the priests...with my family.

Moulin Oui.

Dumont But I do it only because I want to be buried in that place in the cemetery.

Moulin Oui, I know.

(Moulin rises and walks to the altar. He places the priestly stole around his neck and returns to sit beside Dumont at the table. Lights dim. The next dialogue is done like a confessional.)

Dumont Since I come back here to Batoche,... well, since the battle...I haven't been a good Catholic....

Moulin It's no longer important, Gabriel.

Dumont I haven't been back in a church in twenty years.

Moulin When I first came to the North West there were no churches.

Dumont But, I've always loved my neighbor.

Moulin God knows that in your heart you have always been a good man.

Dumont Many times, I get on my horse and ride away...just my horse, my rifle and me. I try to find the old days. When I was happy...before the battle...and the death of Isidore...and papa...and...and, especially, Madeleine. (*Pause.*) It's time, Père. Time I accept that things have changed. The buffalo is gone. Riel, papa, Madeleine...and the others...they are all gone. Soon, it will be my turn.

Moulin Oui.

Dumont One morning I will get on my horse one last time. I will go hunting one last time...but there won't be anything left to hunt. So, I will go home,...I will go to my bed,...and I will die.

Moulin Oui. And you will be buried in God's consecrated ground.

Dumont The worst is...

Moulin What?

Dumont There is no one who will remember me. I don't have any children and it is the job of the children to remember their old parents. Nobody will remember Gabriel Dumont, the old buffalo hunter.

Moulin The Métis will always remember their old friend and capitaine and leader, Gabriel Dumont.

(*Pause. The lights come back up to the previous level.*

Moulin removes the stole, folds it and kisses it.

Dumont rises.)

Dumont I will forgive my old priest...my old friend. But, I will never forgive myself. I fail,...I fail my brothers, the méchifs. Because of me, they have lose their way of life...and because of me, they have to learn how to make deals with the old priests.

(Dumont returns to the chair beside the stove. He sits and soon appears to be asleep. Moulin rises, replaces the stole on the altar, and goes to his office. When he returns, he is carrying the collection basket.)

(He returns to the chair right of the table, sits, and starts counting the pennies.)

Moulin Gabriel. *(Pause.)* You have always been right, my old friend. We did talk to "Général" Middleton. We told him where you were and how many. We gave him the layout of your defenses. But we only did it because we wanted to save our church and rectory. He would have burnt them, Gabriel, just like he had burnt down all the houses from Fish Creek to here. Monseigneur Grandin, he was against your fight, and he had told us that if our church was burnt to the ground, he wouldn't pay to have another one built.

(Dumont rises and moves behind the table to stand beside Moulin. He places a hand on the priest's shoulder.)

Dumont It no longer matters, Père.

Moulin Oui, it does matter. Because, I've looked at the stars. And because we have made a deal. These pennies are all that is left.... In my heart, I've always known it wasn't God...it was these pennies,...this building,... and the church.

(Dumont moves to the staircase. He stops, turns back to look at Moulin. Pause. He moves back to the table, takes up the wine glass, and raises it in a toast to the priest.)

Dumont I have make my peace with God. (*He downs the wine in one gulp.*) And, from my grave, on the hill in the cemetery, I will always be able to see my river. You see, Père, I always want to be able to see my river.... And you...it was always those damn buildings, and those damn pennies.

(**Moulin** remains silent and immobile. In his hands, he holds the pennies. He finally looks down at them.

Dumont turns and leaves by the stairs.)

Slowly fade to black.

La Trahison

pièce en un acte

de Laurier Gareau

avec annotations historiques
d'André Lalonde, Ph.D.
professeur d'histoire à
l'Université de Regina

La Traction

par M. L. L.

Paris, 1900

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Notes pour la production

Les deux hommes sont âgés de plus de 65 ans, toutefois ils ne devraient pas jouer comme s'ils étaient faibles. En 1905, Dumont et le père Moulin menaient encore des vies très actives. On dit même que Gabriel Dumont est allé à la chasse le jour de sa mort.

Décor

L'action se déroule dans les bureaux du père Moulin au deuxième étage du vieux presbytère à Batoche. Les entrées et les sorties devraient se faire en avant-scène côté jardin. Côté jardin, il y a le bureau de poste de Batoche. Près du pupitre du bureau de poste, il y a une chaise en bois avec bras. Au fond, côté jardin, il y a un petit autel. Au centre, une vieille table en bois et deux bancs. En avant-scène, côté cour, il y a une tortue (petite fournaise) et une chaise en bois avec bras. Au fond, côté cour, il y a une porte qui mène vers une chambre à coucher. Sur la table, on aperçoit une lampe à l'huile et des livres.

L'action se déroule à l'automne 1905.

La Trahison

Lorsque les spectateurs arrivent, ils aperçoivent quelques chandelles qui brûlent sur l'autel au fond de la scène. En sourdine, ils entendent une musique d'orgue, soit des extraits de chants grégoriens.

Gabriel Dumont apparaît dans la pénombre, avant-scène côté jardin. Il a une canne, mais il marche comme s'il n'en avait pas besoin. Il surveille attentivement la scène, puis enfin, il se rend à la table où il tourne les pages d'un livre. Il se rend ensuite à l'autel où instinctivement il lève son chapeau, puis il se rend ensuite à la tortue et pendant quelques secondes, il se frotte les mains comme pour les réchauffer au-dessus de la petite fournaise. Enfin, **Dumont** s'assied et tirant son chapeau par-dessus ses yeux, il s'endort.

Le père Moulin arrive, avant-scène côté jardin. **Dumont** l'aperçoit mais il fait semblant d'être endormi. **Moulin** porte une soutane, un surplis et une barrette sur la tête. Dans une main, il porte un calice et dans l'autre le panier de la quête. Il aperçoit **Dumont**. Il se rend à la table où il dépose le panier de la quête et ensuite il se rend à l'autel. Il fait une genuflexion et sert le calice. Puis, il se met à genoux et dit une petite prière. De temps à autre, on apercevra **Dumont** qui lève son chapeau pour voir les actions de **Moulin**.

Une fois sa prière terminée, **Moulin** se lève et éteint les chandelles sur l'autel. Il se rend ensuite dans la chambre. Lorsqu'il revient, il a enlevé le surplis et la barrette. Sur sa tête, il porte maintenant une calotte de prêtre (skull cap).

Moulin regarde **Dumont**, soupire et vient à ses côtés. Il tente de le réveiller en secouant légèrement son épaule.

Moulin Gabriel. (Pause.) Gabriel!

Dumont (Il ouvre lentement les yeux.) Pè'e¹ Moulin.

Moulin Gabriel. Je suis heureux de te voir.

1 - Pè'e (Père) prononcé paix.

- Dumont** Éhé.² (*Pause.*)
- Moulin** C'est trop longtemps depuis ta dernière visite.
- Dumont** Éhé.
- Moulin** Oui, beaucoup trop longtemps.
- Dumont** Éhé.
- Moulin** Tu sais Gabriel... ah... bien... tu es le seul qui ose entrer dans ma maison... dans ce presbytère... sans ma permission.
- Dumont** (*Sursaute.*) Sans vot'e³ permission?
- Moulin** Oui. Et faire comme chez soi.
- Dumont** Sans vot'e permission!!! Les Métchifs, ça l'a-tchi pas payé pour c'te bâtisse citte?
- Moulin** Oui Gabriel, mais...
- Dumont** Les métchifs, ça l'a-tchi pas travaillé à la sueur de leue front pour charrier les logs de...
- Moulin** (*Essayant de calmer DUMONT.*) Oui, oui, oui, Gabriel!
- Dumont** Nous aut'es⁴, les Métchifs, ça l'aime pas ça en parler, mais ça sait qu'la porte de c'te place-citte, ça l'est toujours ouvert... surtout pour la police.
- Moulin** Assis-toi, Gabriel. S'il te plaît.

2 - Éhé : Oui dans le dialecte cri.

3 - Vot'e (votre) prononcé vote.

4 - Aut'es (autres) prononcé hôte.

(Pause. Les deux hommes se regardent pendant un long moment. Puis, **Dumont** se rassoit. **Moulin** traverse à la table et il s'assied sur un des bancs.)

Moulin Nous sommes de vieux amis, Gabriel. Pourquoi devons-nous toujours nous chicaner?

Dumont (Secouant la tête.) Ça l'sait pas, Pè'e.

Moulin Tu me manques, Gabriel.

Dumont J'm'ennuie, Pè'e.

Moulin Raison de plus pour ne pas négliger les vieux amis.

Dumont Ça l'est toute parti.

Moulin Qui?

Dumont Les vieux amis, ça l'est toute parti.

Moulin Voyons! C'est pas vrai, Gabriel.

Dumont Éhé! Ça l'est toute parti. Papa... Isidore, mon frère... pis Madeleine. (Pause.) Surtout Madeleine... pis Annie...

Moulin Annie? Ta fille adoptée?

Dumont Éhé.

Moulin Bien voyons, Gabriel. Annie n'est pas morte. Elle est...

Dumont ... mariée! À un fichu d'Américain! Pis l'seul papa qu'à l'a jamais connu... ben j'sais même pas y you qu'elle est.

Moulin Mais, il y en a d'autres vieux amis à Batoche. Les Caron, les Venne, les Boyer. Ils sont tous tes amis.

Dumont Pis encore, Pè'e, j'm'ennuie!!! (*Pause. Les deux hommes sont silencieux pendant un moment, comme perdus chacun dans ses souvenirs d'antan.*) À mantin^s, ça l'a pensé v'nir voir mes vieilles amies.

Moulin Oui. Ils étaient tous à la messe.

Dumont Non, non. Ça n'parle pas de ceux-là que ça vit encore. J'suis venu voir mes vieilles amies dans le cimetièr.

Moulin Ah!

Dumont Celles que ça l'a toute enterrées dans l'même trou... ensemble... comme des animaux... avec leues têtes d'l'aut'e côté d'la clôture.

Moulin Ces pauvres hommes... ils ont perdu la vie en suivant un fou!

Dumont (*Debout, fâché.*) Ça sont morts s'battant pour leues terres! (*Pause. Fatigué.*) Ça l'est juste un vieux chasseur battu qui va bentôt aller les rejoindre.

Moulin Oui. Moi aussi, je suis un vieil homme qui pense souvent à sa mort.

Dumont Dans l'cimetièr, ça l'a marché jusqu'en haut d'la butte... passé la croix jusqu'à... ben... l'vieux curé ça connaît la place?

Moulin Oui, bien sûr.

Dumont Pis... du haut d'la butte, ça l'a regardé vers la Fourche

des Gros Ventres. Ça là, Pè'e, ça l'était le nom que nos ancêtres ça l'onvait donné à c'te rivière-là. La Fourche des Gros Ventres. Mais l'homme blanc, ça l'onvait changer le nom! Ça l'onvait nommé la rivière Saskatchewan! (*Pause.*) Ça l'a r'gardé à c'te rivière-là, Pè'e! Ça l'a pas changé, c'te rivière-là, Pè'e, pis l'homme blanc, ça peut pas la changer non plus. (*Pause.*) Pis ensuite Pè'e, ça l'a r'gardé d'l'aut'e côté d'la rivière, vers l'ouest, là où l'soleil ça s'couche, pis encore une fois ça l'a vu une place que l'homme blanc ça n'a pas changé avec sa maudite charrue. (*Pause.*) Là, su'e l'haut d'la butte, Pè'e, ça l'est la place que ce vieux chasseur ça veut être enterré quand ça va mourir.

Moulin (*Secouant la tête.*) Gabriel...

Dumont Ce vieux Métchif, ça veut être enterré su'e l'haut d'la butte... tourné vers la Fourche des Gros Ventres... tourné vers c'te terre que l'maudit homme blanc ça peut pas changer!

Moulin Gabriel. Cette butte est en terre bénite!

Dumont Pis?

Moulin Seuls ceux qui ont fait leurs pâques peuvent être enterrés en terre bénite.

Dumont Pis?

Moulin Gabriel. Je ne t'ai pas revu dans l'église depuis la rébellion.

Dumont Ça Pè'e, ça l'est parce que c'vieux Métchif-citte, ça l'a pas remis les pieds dans l'église depuis.

Moulin Alors, Gabriel, ma conscience ne me permettrait pas de t'enterrer en terre bénite.

Dumont Pourquoi pas?

Moulin Parce que c'est écrit dans les lois de l'Église.

Dumont Gabriel Dumont, ça l'est juste un vieux chasseur de buffalos. Les curés, ça nous dit que toutes les hommes ça l'est l'enfant du Bon Dieu. Ça nous dit que l'Bon Dieu ça l'onvait toute faite. Asteur, l'vieux curé, ça dit à Gabriel que ça peut pas être enterré dans la terre du Bon Dieu parce que ça veut pas aller dans l'église des curés.

Moulin L'Église! Les prêtres! Dieu! Tu rejettes l'Église et tu rejettes Dieu!

Dumont Namoya!⁶ Ça rejette l'Église parce que les curés, ça l'onvait trahi les Métchifs!⁷

6 – *Namoya : Non dans le dialecte cri.*

7 – *Le clergé a ouvertement condamné les efforts de Louis Riel et de Gabriel Dumont qui se réservaient le droit d'avoir recours à la violence dans le but de forcer le gouvernement d'Ottawa à reconnaître les droits des Métis.*

Les membres du clergé avaient appuyé les Métis en 1869-70 lors de la rébellion de la Rivière-Rouge. Cependant, les circonstances avaient beaucoup changé en 1885 aux yeux de l'Église.

1. *Le Canada était le propriétaire du territoire du Nord-Ouest en 1885. Tout acte de violence allait à l'encontre de l'autorité légitime du pays.*

2. *La très forte majorité des clercs de la région étaient originaires de la France. En conséquence, ils n'avaient pas la même appréciation du nationalisme canadien-français et métis que leurs prédécesseurs du Manitoba.*

3. *L'idéologie religieuse non orthodoxe prêchée par Louis Riel inquiétait beaucoup les clercs de la région. Riel menaçait d'induire les Métis en erreur et d'empêcher les missionnaires de pouvoir réaliser leur mandat universel, celui d'assurer le salut de leurs ouailles.*

4. *Les attaques contre l'Église catholique romaine suite à la Rébellion de 1869-70 avaient ébranlé les membres du clergé. Ils voulaient à tout prix éviter une répétition de la crise raciale et religieuse qui avait caractérisé le début des années 1870.*

Moulin Alors, c'est pour ça que tu es venu. Encore une fois! C'est toujours la même histoire. Tu viens toujours me voir avec cette idée folle de trahison.

Dumont Ça n'est pas d'la folie, Pè'e! Ça l'sait. *(Pause.)* Mais... ça n'est pas la raison que l'vieux chasseur ça l'est v'nu. Ça l'est à veille de mourir pis ça veut être enterré en haut d'la butte... dans l'cimetière des curés.

Moulin Et je te dis, Gabriel, que je ne peux pas le faire.

Dumont Alors, ça l'est qui que ça peut le faire?

Moulin Toi, Gabriel. Tu es le seul qui peux le faire.

Dumont Comment?

Moulin En te réconciliant avec l'Église.

Dumont Gabriel Dumont, ça l'est un vieux chasseur, Pè'e. Ça l'a toute perdu... toute le monde que ça l'aimait.

Moulin Tu n'as pas tout perdu, Gabriel. Et si tu fais ta paix avec l'Église, tu pourras aller rejoindre ceux que tu aimais... Lorsque tu mourras. Ton père... ton frère Isidore... et Madeleine, ta femme. Tu pourras aller les rejoindre dans le Royaume de Dieu.

Dumont L'Église, ça m'onvait trahi. *(Pause.)* Pè'e Moulin, l'vieux Métchif, ça veut comprendre. L'vieux curé, ça peut m'aider à comprendre. Ça m'dit que ça pourra pas voir sa famille dans l'ciel si ça fait pas sa paix avec l'Église.

Moulin Oui, c'est vrai.

Dumont Mais Pè'e, ça peut pas oublier... ça l'est l'Église que ça l'onvait trahi les Métchifs icitte à Batoche.

- Moulin** Ce ne sont que des sottises dans ta tête, Gabriel.
- Dumont** Namoya! Ça n'a pas oublié... ça n'peut pas oublier que ça l'onvait vu l'pè'e Fourmond... pis l'pè'e Vègreville... pis les aut'es... Ça les onvait vu déboute devant c'te presbytère-citte... pis ça parlait au général Middleton.
- Moulin** Et je t'ai dit une centaine de fois, Gabriel, que notre seul souci était pour les blessés. (*Pause.*) Et je t'ai aussi dit d'oublier le passé, Gabriel.
- Dumont** Namoya! Ça n'peut pas l'oublier... parce que Riel, ça l'est à pourrir dans l'cimetière de Saint-Boniface.
- Moulin** Oui... il fut pendu... et je pense souvent à lui... Mais c'est une vieille histoire. Aujourd'hui, tu es venu me voir parce que tu veux être enterré en terre bénite.
- Dumont** Éhé. Su'e l'haut d'la butte... tourné vers la Fourche des Gros Ventres.
- Moulin** Dis-moi ce que tu veux de moi.
- Dumont** L'vieux chasseur de buffalos, ça l'est v'nu voir son vieil ami. Ça l'est v'nu voir celui que ça l'a toujours dit la vérité... à part d'une fois. L'vieux curé, ça l'a toujours refusé d'admettre que ça l'onvait trahi les Métchifs pendant la bataille.
- Moulin** Gabriel, je te prie...
- Dumont** Mais, ça n'est pas la raison que ça l'est icitte. (*Pause.*) Ça l'est v'nu icitte pour demander des questions au vieux curé... celui que ça l'a toujours dit la vérité... à part d'une fois.
- Moulin** Comment est-ce que je peux t'aider, Gabriel?

- Dumont** Ça veut d'l'aide pour faire sa paix avec l'Église.
- Moulin** Oui, Gabriel, je vais t'aider.
- Dumont** Mais avant, y faut qu'ça fasse du sens.
- Moulin** Du sens?
- Dumont** Éhé. Du sens. Les curés, ça nous dit une chose, pis ça fait autrement.
- Moulin** Je n'comprends pas.
- Dumont** Ça nous dit, les curés, que ça parle pour l'Bon Dieu.
- Moulin** Oui, c'est vrai.
- Dumont** Pis que l'Bon Dieu, ça l'était avec nous aut'es... parce que les Métchifs, ça l'était des bons catholiques.
- Moulin** Oui.
- Dumont** Mais pendant la bataille... les curés, ça l'était du côté d'la police...
- Moulin** Non, Gabriel!
- Dumont** Éhé!
- Moulin** Nous voulions seulement que la bataille prenne fin.⁸

8 – B.T.A. de Montigny a rédigé un texte suite à une entrevue avec Gabriel Dumont à Montréal en décembre 1888. Ce texte fut publié dans un volume préparé par Adolphe Ouimet et de Montigny et intitulé : *Riel : la vérité sur la question méétisse*, Descler, (S.I.), (S.D.).

Voici ce que Gabriel Dumont avait déclaré concernant le comportement du clergé durant la Rébellion de 1885 lors de son entrevue.

Dumont Pour que les Métchifs, ça crève de faim?

Moulin Ils n'avaient aucune raison de crever de faim.

Dumont Not'e façon d'vivre, ça l'était passée. La chasse... pis la traite de fourrure... pis avec le chemin de fer que ça l'était en train de bâtir... les Métchifs ça l'allait perdre leur job de frettage. Ehé! Les Métchifs, ça l'allait crever d'faim!

Moulin Vous n'aviez qu'à vous établir sur des fermes.

Dumont Des fermes! Bah!

Moulin La vie du fermier Gabriel... ah...

Dumont (*Il s'approche du Père Moulin.*) Les jeunes Métchifs, Pè'e, ça l'est toute devenu des paresseux aujourd'hui.

Moulin Ils mènent de belles vies.

Dumont (*Il tourne le dos au Père Moulin.*) Bahhh! Les Métchifs, ça n'est plus des hommes libres. Comment ça

« Nous l'avons appris de source certaine : Middleton, malgré qu'il eût reçu du renfort, désespérait nous réduire, quand des traîtres, que je ne veux pas nommer, lui ont fait connaître que nous n'avions plus de munitions, et que, à part quelques-uns, tous les Métis étaient découragés. Que d'ailleurs si les assiégeants ne se pressaient pas, des secours arriveraient bientôt pour renforcer les assiégés.

Ces traîtres étaient continuellement en conversation avec l'ennemi et avec les nôtres qu'ils engageaient à déposer les armes en leur offrant des sauf-conduits.

Ce qui contribua considérablement à déconcerter nos soldats, c'est qu'on leur refusait tout secours, religieux, à eux, à leurs femmes et à leurs enfants. »

Riel : la vérité sur la question métisse p. 123.

peut-tchi mener la belle vie quand ça n'est plus des hommes libres, hein Pè'e?

Moulin (Il se lève dans l'espoir de convaincre **Dumont**.)
Regarde le grain qu'ils produisent. Ils en produisent pour nourrir le monde... pour faire du pain pour tout le monde... des galettes, Gabriel!

Dumont Le grain, Pè'e, ça l'est en train d'pourrir dans les graineries parce que personne ne veut l'acheter.

Moulin Mais un jour, Gabriel... un jour nous serons une communauté bien établie... et le monde voudra le grain des Métis.

Dumont (Secouant la tête.) Pis nous aut'es, Pè'e? Ça l'était la belle vie, ça, quand Gabriel Dumont, ça l'était un jeune chasseur... pis l'pè'e Moulin, ça l'était un jeune curé, hein?

Moulin Tu n'écoutes pas, Gabriel.

Dumont Gabriel Dumont, ça l'écoute. Ça l'écoute les cris des apisesisiw⁹, les p'tchis, parce que les enfants, ça les importants aux Métchifs.

Moulin Et moi, Gabriel, je pleurais pour ces petits... pour les apisesisiw... quand tes rebelles les mettaient en danger.

Dumont Les Métchifs, ça n'était pas des rebelles, Pè'e. Ça s'battait juste pour la belle vie.

Moulin Pensiez-vous à vos petits... et à vos femmes... quand vous avez sorti vos fusils pour...

Dumont Ça pensait à rien d'aut'e, Pè'e!

9 – Apisesisiw : Les petits enfants dans le dialecte cri.

Moulin Jamais! Vous n'étiez qu'une bande de jeunes écervelés qui cherchaient à vivre comme leurs grands-pères avaient vécu.

Dumont Éhé!

Moulin Gabriel! Toi, comme les autres, vous devez accepter que votre mode de vie est chose du passé. Le mode de vie de vos grands-pères était basé sur un monumental gaspille du terrain.

Dumont Ça l'était nor'e terrain, Pè'e!

Moulin Mais pense donc au gaspille, Gabriel!

Dumont Quel gaspille, Pè'e? Ça peut-tchi me dire quel gaspille?

Moulin Les Prairies peuvent accueillir des milliers de fermiers. Auparavant, seulement une petite poignée de chasseurs métis et sauvages pouvaient survivre dans ces Prairies.

Dumont Éhé. Pis ça l'était la belle vie, ça!

Moulin Éhé. Pis ça l'était la belle vie. Mais le bonheur sur terre ne garantira pas le paradis.

Dumont Toé pis ton paradis! Les Métchifs, ça l'onvait trouvé leue paradis, icitte à Batoche... pis à la P'tchite Ville! (*Pause.*) Quand Gabriel Dumont, ça l'onvait trois ans... ça l'onvait pas encore atteint la hauteur du fusil de son papa, ça onvait été avec sa famille dans la prairie du Missouri Coteau. Ça l'était pour être ma première chasse aux buffalos. Gabriel Dumont, ça l'était encore trop p'tchi, alors ça devait rester derrière avec les femmes pis les charrettes. Mais Gabriel Dumont, ça l'était fier de guetter nos cinquante chasseurs que ça l'était montés sue leues meilleurs chevaux. Ça portait le linge des chasseurs métchifs... quelques morceaux aux couleurs vives, ça l'était toute

ce que ça portait de vot'e civilisation... la Compagnie d'la Baie d'Hudson.

(*Pause.*) Gabriel Dumont, ça guette les chasseurs alors que ça l'attend en ligne drête... ça l'attend le signal du capitaine. Les vieilles femmes, les femmes pis les mères des chasseurs pis nous aut'es les apisesisiw... ça va suiv'e les chasseurs dans les charrettes. Ça l'attend! Pis tout à coup, le capitaine ça donne le signal!

(*Pause.*) Les chasseurs, ça quitte le campement... lentement... pis plus vite... pis enfin ça l'allait au grand galop! Mais à cause de la poussière, nous aut'es dans les charrettes, ça peut encore les voir. Les femmes pis les apisesisiw, ça grimpe dans les charrettes pour aller rejoindre les chasseurs... ça l'était dans l'milieu des buffalos. Les chasseurs, ça l'était dans l'milieu des buffalos, tirant pis tirant encore. (*Utilisant sa canne, Dumont mime l'action du chasseur. Pause.*)

Les vieilles femmes pis les apisesisiw dans les charrettes, ça commence à les suiv'e. Ça les perd de vue, mais ça sait quand même où aller... Ça peut voir la poussière pis ça l'entend les coups d'fusil... pis ça l'entend batt'e les sabots d'un million de buffalos sur la prairie. (*Pause.*) Les sabots d'un million de buffalos sur la prairie dure. (*Pause.*) Ça l'était une communauté, Pè'e, les Métchifs, dans c'temps-là! Dans c'temps-là, les Métchifs ça vivait pour une chose... la chasse! Ça Pè'e, ça l'était la bonne vie, quand les Métchifs ça pouvait enfin partir pour la chasse.

(*Durant une grande partie de son monologue, Dumont était tourné vers le public. Il se tourne maintenant vers Moulin.*) Ça l'était un peuple, les Métchifs, dans c'temps-là! Ça l'était une communauté. Chaque Métchif, ça l'onvait sa place dans la communauté. L'awasis¹⁰ de trois ans, la vieille veuve, le meilleur